[Introduction]

free institutions, makes it clear that the traditions of the West have a permanent place in Hungarian life. Yesterday the West was Germany. To-morrow it will be England. She has become our nearest Western friend in a shrinking world. The Battle of Britain was also fought for liberty on the Danube.

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566 When surveying Hungary's history, the reader must bear in mind her peculiar characteristics. The archaic social structure of the country has been preserved intact throughout the centuries, thus leaving the power in the hands of a small minority of nobles. The autonomy of the counties and their ancient hierarchy reinforced such a development. This unfortunate feature was only aggravated by the fact that, during the century and a half which witnessed vast progress in nearly all the European countries that benefited from the influence of Humanism, the Renaissance and the Reformation, Hungary, with an almost fossilised social structure, lay buried under the Turkish occupation. Apart from the brilliant episode of Matthias Corvinus, the Renaissance hardly touched the country, and ironically enough it was not so much the Reformation as the officially fostered Counter-Reformation which left its mark on the intellectual life of the Magyars. When Hungary re-emerged at the end of the seventeenth century her social structure was that of the fifteenth century. It might be said that what the Thirty Years' War was to Germany, the 150 years of Turkish occupation were to Hungary.

●[671] Hungarian Law, as codified in the sixteenth century, has been based throughout on the Tripartite Code of Werbőczi, published in 1525, which in its turn was largely inspired by reaction to the peasant revolt, bloodily suppressed in 1514. It divided the Hungarian people into the castes of big and small nobility, with the clergy on the one hand, the plebs on the other. This fatal cleavage in the Hungarian social structure stamped its mark on centuries of history, and made the anti-democratic orientation a fundamental trait of Hungarian politics. This semi-feudal character of Hungarian society, occasionally tinted as it was with theocratic colours, represented a cul-de-sac of all Hungarian
000 endeavours. Mr. Pálóczy's vivid description of the relationship between master and serf is by no means an overstatement or exaggeration. I myself, who was brought up to be one of these masters, must blush at the way my own experiences confirm Mr. Pálóczy's description—experiences which induced me to leave that medieval atmosphere of feudal privilege.

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The book puts its finger on the crucial point of modern Hungar-

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105 Hungarian Empire had failed to bring about the establishment of a sound Danubian Federalism; instead, a veritable riot of competing national interests had come into being.

●CC3 Other sources of social disorder can be found in the events 175 which followed the close of the First World War. The fall of 727 the monarchy denuded the country of strong leadership. Democratic forces under the direction of intellectuals of integrity rallied to form a government; but many of them may not unfairly be said to have lacked experience in distinguishing between obtainable objectives and ideals beyond reach. Their government quickly succumbed to a bold experiment in Bolshevist tactics which was tried at the same time in Berlin and Bavaria. Under Béla Kun, an erstwhile insurance agent who had been a prisoner in Russia and was now the power behind the Hungarian scene, a program of ruthless repression and enforced socialization was inaugurated. Troops and police raided the opposition, and "revolutionary tribunals" imposed death sentences which, although they reached an acknowledged total of 585, were only a sample of what was to ensue twenty-five years later. However, Kun's endeavors fell short of success—in large measure because occupation troops, primarily French, were present and in control. That fact enabled a counterrevolutionary movement to get under way; and by 1920 its army, commanded by Admiral Nicholas Horthy, had [642] gained the upper hand. The Allies refused to permit the return of a Habsburg to the throne, and so a new government was formed as a Regency. It had to deal almost immediately with excesses by armed bands seeking revenge who, before they were curbed, tried and executed more than 300 persons. They were also virulently anti-Semitic, alleging that a disproportionately large number of Jews had been associated with Kun's regime.

ooo As a result of the Regency's efforts to effect a measure of